

Going Green
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President, Board of County Commissioners

It isn't easy to be green! This lament made by a popular cartoon character, no longer rings true. It is actually easier than ever to be green!

So, exactly what does it mean to go green? Going green means reducing the consumption of energy from non-renewable energy sources, reducing water consumption, protecting the environment, and saving money. Even for people who do not believe in climate change and the need to address global warming, there is common ground in saving money by reducing energy and fuel consumption.

There are a number of easy and low cost ways to reduce energy consumption in buildings either at home or at work. These ideas include changing light bulbs, installing lighting occupancy sensors, installing programmable thermostats, and replacing hot water tank units with insta-heat and tankless water systems. Water consumption can be reduced through low flow toilets, replacing showerheads, and remembering to not leave water running when brushing teeth or during similar activities. Frederick County Government has made it easier than ever to actively participate in recycling through the new single-stream recycling program. Backyard composting bins are also available at a nominal price at the County Reichs Ford Road Landfill. Reducing fuel consumption can be easily accomplished by combining trips and by carpooling. When gas prices approached \$4.00 per gallon, vehicle miles traveled fell for the first time in decades as people made a concerted effort to reduce driving.

Long-term choices for energy and fuel savings are more expansive including switching to geo-thermal heating systems, which work well in many areas of Frederick County, purchasing hybrid vehicles, replacing old appliances with Energy Star appliances, and implementing green building standards.

The Frederick County Commissioners have decided to take a leadership role in promoting energy conservation, environmental sustainability, and stewardship. In 2007, the County adopted a strategic plan objective to:

Adopt a comprehensive energy plan for Frederick County Government, which establishes annual definitive goals to reduce the county's use of non-renewable energy over a 15-year period in its office buildings, facilities, and vehicle fleet by 50% or more.

To accomplish this objective, a Comprehensive Energy Plan and action items have been drafted. A number of projects and steps have already been implemented to advance this goal including:

Green Buildings - The Brunswick Branch Library is being designed to LEED building standards and a "green roof" has been designed for the Catoctin Nature Center.

Landfill Gas to Energy Project – A project has been initiated to capture the methane gas from the landfill for conversion to electricity to utilize for on site operations and to sell to the grid. The collection and conversion of methane gas to electricity reduces greenhouse gas emissions.

Recycling – The recently introduced single-stream recycling program is the largest program in the State of Maryland. The program will be fully implemented in Frederick County Public Schools in the upcoming academic year. Single-stream recycling will be expanded to commercial and multi-family housing.

Building Renovations and Upgrades – Numerous energy-efficiency retrofits and upgrades have been completed and saved \$150,000 annually. These include changes to lighting, thermostats, HVAC upgrades and roofs.

Greening the Fleet – The County has purchased hybrid and flex fuel replacement vehicles including two hybrid busses for transit.

Fuel Conservation – The County has set a goal of reducing county agency fuel consumption by 10%. At the fifth reporting period fuel consumption has been reduced by 9%.

Legislation – Adopted a stream buffer protection ordinance, establishing variable setbacks for development from streams and water bodies. Adopted a wind and solar zoning text amendment to permit and facilitate private use of wind and solar systems.

In 2008, the County Commissioners created the Office of Environmental Sustainability to provide leadership and coordination to address issues related to climate change, energy independence, and environmental sustainability. A citizen-based Sustainability Commission was appointed in April of this year to engage public participation and public energy to support these goals. These meetings are open to the public.

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